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OFFICE OF  
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

## MEMORANDUM

### *The Succession Issue in Brazil*

**Secret**

14 December 1972

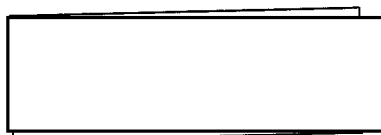
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# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

ONE MEMORANDUM  
14 December 1972

### THE SUCCESSION ISSUE IN BRAZIL

*In our last Estimate on Brazil (NIE 93-72, The New Course in Brazil, 13 January 1972), we painted a fairly bright picture in discussing the nation's prospects. We would do the same today, for Brazil's continued high rate of economic growth, relatively effective management of government, and growing confidence in its national destiny are still most impressive. But we also outlined some persistent problems in Brazil -- including widespread poverty, the alienation of a substantial segment of the well-educated classes, and the lack of an effective system for political succession. This memorandum explores two aspects of the latter issue: (1) the more immediate problem of selecting a successor to President Médici and (2) the long-term problem of structuring a political system that broadens the narrow military-technocratic base of the regime.*

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*This Memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated within CIA.*

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# I. THE IMMEDIATE SUCCESSION PROBLEM

1. In NIE 93-72 (*The New Course in Brazil*) we wrote, "The Brazilian military has not institutionalized the succession, and military unity will be sorely tested if personal and service rivalries produce a disorganized scramble for power." Since the Estimate was completed, the issue of presidential succession has flared up repeatedly, most often in private but occasionally in public. It would be an exaggeration to call it the Achilles Heel of the government, but it certainly is the principal short-term threat to military unity and to the stability of the regime. It is also one act in a longer playing drama. The *ad hoc* methods that the generals use to transfer political power and their inattention to the problem of establishing permanent political institutions are serious weaknesses, but there are no tidy solutions in sight.

2. President Médici's term runs out in March 1974, and he would like discussion about the succession postponed for as long as possible. There has been some talk about selecting the presidential candidate as early as March 1973, but Médici does not relish being a lame duck with his successor looking over his shoulder, and he does not want his ministers shaping their policies to conform to someone else's desires. One of the regime's great

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strengths over the last few years has been its apparent institutional unity and absence of obvious ideological divisions. But, as Médici and his colleagues on the high command understand all too well, unity is difficult to preserve when generals are jockeying for position. The President wants to be able to carry out his policies without the distractions of presidential politics.

3. Still, the succession to Médici has become one of Brazil's most popular topics of gossip -- second only to soccer and perhaps the stock market. Names of generals are bandied about constantly, but seldom openly, for the regime is especially sensitive about the matter and quick to crack down on those who discuss it in public. In August 1972, following the publication of a few articles about the succession in the prestigious newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, the government specifically prohibited any more mention of the succession issue in the press and began harassing *O Estado* in a particularly crude fashion. The army high command insists that the problem be solved behind closed doors without outside interference.

4. Médici has been under pressure from a few of his chief supporters to extend his present term or to opt for a second one. Like most of his colleagues, however, he abhors the notion of *continuismo* and associates it with populist demagoguery of the

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past. It is a matter of principle among Brazil's generals that their regime must be free of the personality cults of previous governments. Moreover, Médici, who is nearly 70 years old, is not in particularly good health. He wants to hand over power in 1974 and intends to do so.

5. The generals well remember the battles over the presidential succession in past years and would like to avoid a repetition. As usual, the high command will probably consult the more junior generals and the colonels, but the final decision will be made by the senior generals alone, for that also is the tradition in the Brazilian army. Médici, who has gained considerable prestige and authority since he was elevated to the presidency in 1969, would like to pick his own successor to ensure continuity, retain some influence, and avoid both excessive infighting and personal embarrassment. His views will be more important than anyone else's. He will not make the decision by himself, however, nor does he appear to have the power to force through a person not also highly regarded by his peers.

6. It would probably be wrong to describe the army as being sharply divided on policy issues or on the manner of wielding power, but there are differences of shading on most issues. Thus the group once associated with Castello Branco's regime (1964-1967) is

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generally considered to be somewhat more open-minded in its approach to governing than those currently in charge, i.e., less authoritarian, less inclined to be dogmatic in dealing with criticism, more cerebral and less self-righteous. All the generals are nationalistic, but some are more extreme and xenophobic in their views than others. All are inclined to be tough on "subversion", but some are more ruthless than others and some are inclined to consider all critics of the government as subversive. It is impossible to say for sure where most of the candidates for president stand on these issues, for the armed forces hierarchy is very good at shielding its differences from public view.

7. Every active senior general and some who have retired as well consider themselves candidates for the presidency, even those who clearly lack sufficient ability or support.\* A few civilians have been occasionally mentioned for the job, as have some lower ranking generals, but there is little doubt that the high command will insist on elevating one of the senior officers. The choice, however, is not an easy one. The man most often mentioned these

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\* There are 147 generals on active duty, of whom 18 now are full generals and 41 major generals. The Brazilian army does not have the rank of lieutenant general. Among the retired generals, only a few can realistically be considered candidates for president.

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days is retired General Ernesto Geisel, head of the national petroleum company and brother of the powerful Army Minister. Geisel has a good reputation as an administrator, and his close association with the Castello Branco regime has won him the backing of military officers and civilian leaders active in the early years of military rule but in eclipse more recently. But Geisel's candidacy may have surfaced too soon. Other generals are jealous of him, and he suffers the other disadvantages of a frontrunner. Indeed, his endorsement by *O Estado de São Paulo* may backfire with Médici and other key members of the ruling elite, for it makes him appear like the *Castellista* candidate.

8. Junior and middle grade officers have their own favorites and apparently would prefer a couple of charismatic major generals, Reynaldo Mello de Almeida and Euler Bentes Monteiro, who are not associated with the senior chiefs. The younger officers are concerned about the style of their leaders and would prefer young, vigorous, responsive managers, but they have no illusions about being able to exert any great influence on the old guard. Indeed, they do not expect to be consulted and are prepared to go along with the choice of the generals.

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9. Whoever becomes the next president will be expected to carry on the regime's basic policies as laid out over the last eight years. The military leaders want rapid economic development, the elevation of Brazil to its proper place in the world, the elimination of corruption and self-interest in the public service, and the uprooting of subversion. In this sense, there is little difference among potential choices to succeed. Nonetheless, the choice of president will be important in determining the style of government, and the personal qualities and inclinations of the individual who ends up with the job will be significant. Though the collective selects him, the president is not the mere agent of the collective afterwards. He has a great deal of freedom in choosing his ministers and household staff, and a say in all promotions and key assignments. He is in a position to make changes that could be of considerable cumulative significance over the longer term, e.g., more or less emphasis on order and discipline, and more or less flexibility in carrying out broad policies.

10. The president's public image also matters. Much of the current regime's public acceptance is a result of Médici's popularity and his behavior in office. When he built himself up as the nation's number one sports fan, he managed to humanize his office and to gain a rapport with the public that none of his

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predecessors could match. Médici projects the image of a stodgy and austere but earnest man who really does care about the problems of the poor. Furthermore, Médici is considered incorruptible, in contrast to many associated with Costa e Silva, who was in power from 1967 until 1969.

11. The generals will have a difficult time coming up with the right man for the presidency. There are plenty of candidates, but none appears to be outstanding, and however the race for president ends up there will be some bruised feelings within the high command. But the odds are good that the generals will be able to settle on a man without disrupting the system. They are all aware that any who complain about being mistreated will be forced into early retirement or shunted off to the boondocks.

## II. THE LONGER TERM PROBLEM

12. The military will sooner or later have to face up to the longer term issue: that of establishing permanent political institutions and of dealing with important elements of Brazilian society now almost excluded from the political process. Some generals have been talking about holding onto the reins of government until the year 2000, but whether they can realistically expect to do so is

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questionable. Much of the prestige and authority of the regime derives from the success of its policies, in particular its economic program. What happens if the generals hold onto power but become less successful in governing the nation -- if the economic boom collapses or corruption becomes widespread again? If the indifference of the masses turns to alienation, or if the alienation of significant segments of Brazilian society takes a more active form?

13. The government as now constituted is a coalition of military officers and apolitical technocrats. Together they make up a new kind of ruling elite, but they do not represent constituencies or feel obligated to deal with desires of the public at large. The most enthusiastic supporters of the regime are the industrialists centered in São Paulo, for they have benefited most from the government's economic policies. The government also draws considerable support from the middle classes as a whole.

14. The generals have established two national political parties, one to represent the government and the other the opposition, but the parties have no real roots in the electorate, and they have garnered little support or respect nationwide. Membership in the Congress absorbs the energies of some politicians and

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gives them the prestige that goes with doing favors for friends, but the Congress as an institution is not in a position to exercise initiative or to oppose the wishes of the executive. As presently constituted, the Congress might find it difficult to handle power even if the military chose to give it some.

15. Though overt opposition to the regime is muted, many of the key elements of Brazilian society are alienated from the government. Church leaders deplore the regime's sometimes brutal tactics against dissidents and its inadequate attention to social justice. Students, politicians, journalists, and intellectuals in general chafe at censorship and the government's intolerance of criticism. Since the 1930s, labor unions have been virtually an offshoot of the ministry of labor, but their present role is restricted as never before. Many workers feel they should be benefiting more from the economic boom.

16. Perhaps the problem was best posed by Roberto Campos, Planning Minister under Castello Branco, in a celebrated newspaper article in August. He told the generals that the extension of their rule till the year 2000 would be naïve if proposed as a political model and dangerous if used to institutionalize arbitrary rule. He warned that the alliance between the military and the technocrats

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should not indefinitely be substituted for political parties, and he added that in the long run only political parties can articulate aspirations, form loyalties to the system, and regularize changes in leadership.

17. Campos' appreciation of political parties is not shared by Brazil's present military rulers, who value authority, unity, and discipline above all else. Political parties can, of course, be made into vehicles for maintaining authority and order while representing or at least co-opting other segments of society, but the Brazilian generals have so far not shown much enthusiasm for parties of any kind. Not without reason, they have a deep seated suspicion of the old style political organizations. They dislike the notion of paying more attention to public opinion and of making political-style compromises. They are sure of the rightness of their own course, and believe that tolerance of criticism would open the door for "populist demagogues out to subvert the national character". Many are afraid that their revolution might begin to unravel if they permitted the traditional politicians some share of power. Furthermore, some generals may believe that they do not have to establish a system that is directly responsive to the popular will. The Brazilian masses after all are not clamoring for change and expect

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relatively little of their government; the better educated and placed groups are effectively cowed these days.

18. Yet the generals almost certainly recognize that the military cannot monopolize power indefinitely or continue to hold the presidency indefinitely. They and their successors would almost certainly prefer that over the longer term the military not remain directly involved in politics, but return instead to something like the traditional role of power behind the scene. The military leaders would have to be assured, however, that there would be no return to the politics of the 1950s and the early 1960s.

19. With some misgivings, the next administration is likely to address the problems of formalizing the succession and of increasing the role of civilians. An important objective would be to give the regime a greater aura of legitimacy and permanence. Initially, the generals will almost certainly not aim for direct popular rule, but for the establishment of a somewhat more open system designed to incorporate those willing to be co-opted. At the present time, most Brazilians are content with the military government or are apathetic.

20. With the passage of time, the pressures for a return to more open politics are sure to grow. The generals may prove less effective in spurring economic growth, and the population may become

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more critical and demanding. Officers who will be moving into the senior grades in the future may be more confident that they can cope with an open political system, and more willing to accelerate the process of moving toward one. If so, there is a good prospect that the transition can be carried out gradually and peacefully. If the lid is kept on too long, however, the military may find itself increasingly isolated and unpopular. It may also be subject to splits within its own ranks on policy or generational grounds; such divisions have occurred often since the Lieutenants' Revolt in 1922. Under these circumstances, changes in the political system would be more sudden and tumultuous.

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The Succession Issue in Brazil

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S-E-C-R-E-T

7 November 1972

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MEMORANDUM FOR:   
John Huizenga

SUBJECT : Additional Distribution for MEMORANDUM:  
"The Soviet Leadership: Toward a New  
Configuration?"

Subject to your approval, we would like the following  
to receive this Memorandum:

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Ray S. Cline

A copy of the attached Memorandum has been forwarded to Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Davies.

JOHN HUIZENGA  
Director  
National Estimates

7 November 1972  
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101  
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

*Formerly  
Staff memo 49-72*

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs

There has been some recent speculation on possible instability within the Soviet leadership. The attached paper presents an analysis of that situation as we now see it.

Richard Helms  
Director

Attachment:

Memorandum, dated 7 Nov 72  
"The Soviet Leadership: Toward  
a New Configuration?"

8 November 1972  
(DATE)

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Identical memos w/attachment also sent to: Hon. William P. Rogers, Secretary of State; Hon. Kenneth Rush, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Hon. John N. Irwin II, Deputy Secretary of State; Hon. Walter J. Stoessel, Jr., Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European Affairs.

72-5821

MEMORANDUM FOR: Honorable Kenneth Rush  
Deputy Secretary of Defense

There has been some recent speculation on possible instability within the Soviet leadership. The attached paper presents an analysis of that situation as we now see it.

**DEP SEC. HAS SEEN** *Rich Helms*  
Director

Attachment:  
Memorandum, dated 7 Nov 72  
"The Soviet Leadership: Toward  
a New Configuration?"

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8 November 1972  
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